

Julian Scott Homestead



Introduction

The Julian Scott Homestead is a building of considerable historic interest, retaining an optimistic proportion of its original fabric despite subsequent alterations and adaptations. This report presents observations from a site inspection, identifying surviving historic features and assessing their contribution to the building's overall heritage significance. The assessment follows the principles outlined in Historic England's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008), which provides a framework for understanding significance through four interconnected heritage values: evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal.

Definitions

Evidential Value

Evidential value relates to the physical remains of a building and the information they provide about its past. Historic fabric, construction methods, materials, tool marks, and alterations can reveal how a building was constructed, used, and adapted over time. Features such as original timbers, saw marks, and surviving finishes provide direct evidence of past technologies, craftsmanship, and local building traditions.

Historical Value

Historical value relates to the connections a building has with people, events, and aspects of the past. This may include associations with important individuals, changes in use, or the role a building has played within a community over time. Features that retain a direct link to historic occupants or significant periods in a building's development can provide a tangible connection between the present and the past.

Aesthetic Value

Aesthetic value relates to the ways in which a building is experienced visually and physically. This includes its architectural design, craftsmanship, materials, proportions, and the character created through the combination of historic elements. The quality and appearance of surviving features can contribute to the building's sense of place, authenticity, and architectural significance.

Communal Value

Communal value relates to the meaning and importance a building holds for people and communities. This may include social, cultural, spiritual, or collective connections that have developed through a building's history and continued use. Buildings associated with notable individuals, local traditions, or community identity can hold significance beyond their physical fabric by representing shared memories and values.

Each identified feature is considered in relation to these values, examining not only its physical characteristics and condition but also the information it provides about the building's construction, development, use, and cultural importance. The assessment also considers the wider role of the Julian Scott Homestead within the identity of Johnson, Vermont. As the former residence of Julian Scott, a significant nineteenth-century American artist, the building represents an important connection between the town's architectural heritage and its artistic history. Alongside institutions such as the Vermont Studio Center, which has established Johnson as a place associated with contemporary arts, the homestead contributes to the community's ongoing cultural narrative by preserving a tangible link to the artists who have shaped the town's identity.

This approach seeks to establish an understanding of the building's significance, recognising both its physical historic fabric and its broader social and cultural associations. The findings will inform appropriate conservation priorities that support the retention, interpretation, and careful management of the homestead as a valued heritage asset for future generations.



The surviving door mouldings possess **evidential value** through their ability to demonstrate historic carpentry techniques, construction methods, and phases of alteration within the homestead. They also contribute **aesthetic value** by representing the craftsmanship and architectural detailing of the building's original entrance, which is an important element in understanding its historic character. If confirmed as original fabric, the mouldings would also hold **historical value** through their association with the early occupation and development of the Julian Scott Homestead. As a prominent feature of the building's principal entrance, their preservation would support the retention and interpretation of the building's architectural identity and contribute to its wider significance within the community.



One exciting detail is the original siding hidden beneath a layer of modern siding. The extent of survival is unknown, and a large portion on the north side of the building was lost due to the latest renovation.

The surviving original siding possesses considerable evidential value through its potential to retain original tool marks, paint finishes and timber characteristics. If confirmed as locally milled timber, it would also contribute to the historical value of the building by demonstrating use of locally produced materials within Johnson during the early nineteenth century. Preservation in situ should therefore be regarded as a conservation priority.



The original subflooring observed within the basement provides important evidence of early nineteenth-century timber conversion practices. The surviving saw marks are characteristic of the water-powered “up-and-down” sawmills that were abundant in the town during the period of construction, preserving direct evidence of local sawmilling technology and methods of timber processing. Although this fabric would likely remain concealed following conservation works due to its location, its retention is important as it contains valuable information regarding the methods of timber conversion employed during the building’s construction. As largely undisturbed concealed fabric, the subfloor possesses high **evidential value**, providing archaeological evidence that contributes to an understanding of the building’s material history and local industrial practices.



The original flooring layer located between the subfloor and the current floor covering represents a potentially significant surviving element of the homestead’s historic fabric. Its condition cannot be fully assessed until the modern flooring material is removed; however, if intact, it would likely represent the surface used during the early occupation of the building and potentially the floor with which Julian Scott himself would have had direct contact. The survival of these floorboards would therefore provide a tangible connection to the building’s historic occupants and contribute substantially to the authenticity of the interior. As a result, the original flooring would possess considerable **historical value**, with its preservation enhancing the understanding of the homestead’s domestic history and strengthening the significance of future conservation efforts.



The surviving sheathing appears to consist of original horizontal barnboard, with the characteristic up-and-down saw marks providing evidence of early nineteenth-century water-powered sawmilling practices. The use of horizontal boarding reflects regional construction trends during the 1830s and 1840s, a period when builders in northern Vermont were transitioning away from vertical-plank construction towards timber-framed buildings with sawn board sheathing. A small section of the barnboard was carefully exposed by removing a limited area of spray foam insulation, allowing the historic fabric to be examined without causing damage. Although exposing the full extent of the original sheathing would be a laborious process, it remains a feasible conservation objective that could reveal further information about the building's original construction.

The removal of the original interior plaster and lath has resulted in the loss of an important layer of historic fabric; however, surviving evidence remains visible through nail holes and plaster remnants on the timber frame and studs. Further analysis of these marks may provide insight into the original lathing method employed, such as the use of accordion lath or individual wooden slats. The surviving horizontal barnboarding therefore possesses significant **evidential value**, providing direct evidence of regional building practices and the evolution of timber construction methods in northern Vermont during the early nineteenth century. Its survival contributes to an understanding of the homestead's original construction

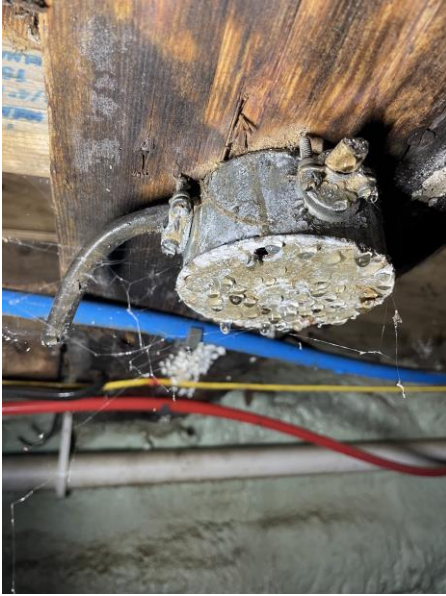
sequence and the wider development of local building traditions.



Ground-floor joist containing hewing marks. These timbers are in excellent condition, however immediate intervention is required (see next image).



Surface moisture is collecting on the timbers and surfaces of the ceiling in the basement. This will certainly attract fungi, which will break down the heartwood and allow insect infestation if not remedied ASAP. There is no air circulation or movement due to the spray in foam. Even the windows were covered in spray-foam! This is a disaster for a timber-framed building.



This image depicts the condensation built up on the metal fixture in the basement. The spray foam is trapping the moisture in the basement. This structure is a perfect example of what can go wrong when buildings are not insulated properly, leading to moisture problems.



A close-up image depicting conversion marks on the subfloor.

The survival of this structure through major flood events, including the 1927 flood, the 1995 flood, and more recent flooding in Johnson, demonstrates the resilience of its historic construction and the effectiveness of traditional timber-building practices. The floor system, despite repeated exposure to flooding, has remained substantially intact due to the ability of the timber frame to dry naturally through established patterns of ventilation and air movement. Conversely, recent alterations—particularly the application of spray-foam insulation—have introduced a significant threat to the building’s heritage fabric by altering its historic environmental performance. The restriction of airflow and entrapment of moisture within the timber structure has accelerated deterioration processes, creating conditions more harmful than those caused by previous flood events. Without appropriate intervention, this loss of breathability risks the progressive decay and eventual loss of significant historic fabric, diminishing the building’s evidential and historical values.